

GENDERCIDE #2

**BUTCH
HAIN WALK**

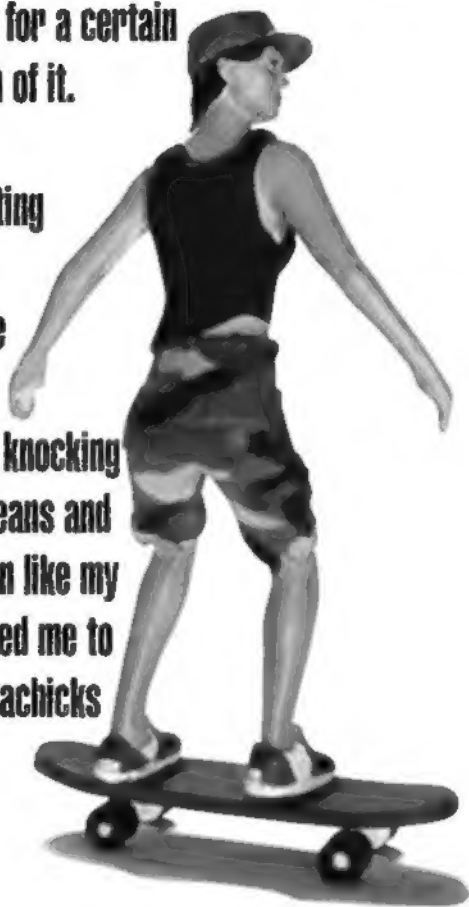
Where have all the butches gone?

I was walking down the hall at work a few weeks ago and saw a woman waiting for her classroom to open. As I glanced at her, I noticed that she was wearing a pair of sort of beat up skate shoes. As I was thinking about her look, it reminded me of all my lesbian friends in college who were butches.

Today, as I look around my queer universe, I realize just how invisible butches really are. It seems like every one that I know has either sublimated "butch" into a semi-generic lesbian identity, or is somewhere in the process of transitioning from F to M. As a result of that epiphany, I began to ask around about what happened to butch. The more I asked, the more I

realized that it wasn't just butch that I was looking for, but more specifically for a certain visual representation of it.

I was (and am) questing for the skaters and punk butch girls. The ones with dreadlocks, and mohawks, knocking around in shredded jeans and Doc Martens. Women like my friends who introduced me to Bikini Kill and the Lunachicks and made me read Dorothy Alison and Leslie Feinberg.



After conferring with different sources, both butch and femme, here's what I've pieced together:

First, a lot of them simply grew up. As they graduated from college and moved into the "real" world, the need to fit in, to cover their tattoos and trade their boots in for more stylish (read: practical for the office) footwear took over. For this I hold no grudge or judgement, even as I grasp for more of an alt.femme punkboi image while moving towards my mid-thirties.

The second thing is that a lot of the kids who would be butch are now simply transitioning. In the past six or seven years, I feel like there's a huge explosion in the FTM and genderqueer communities. As more people come out as trans, and write and network, the safer it becomes for others to do so, and they are in droves.



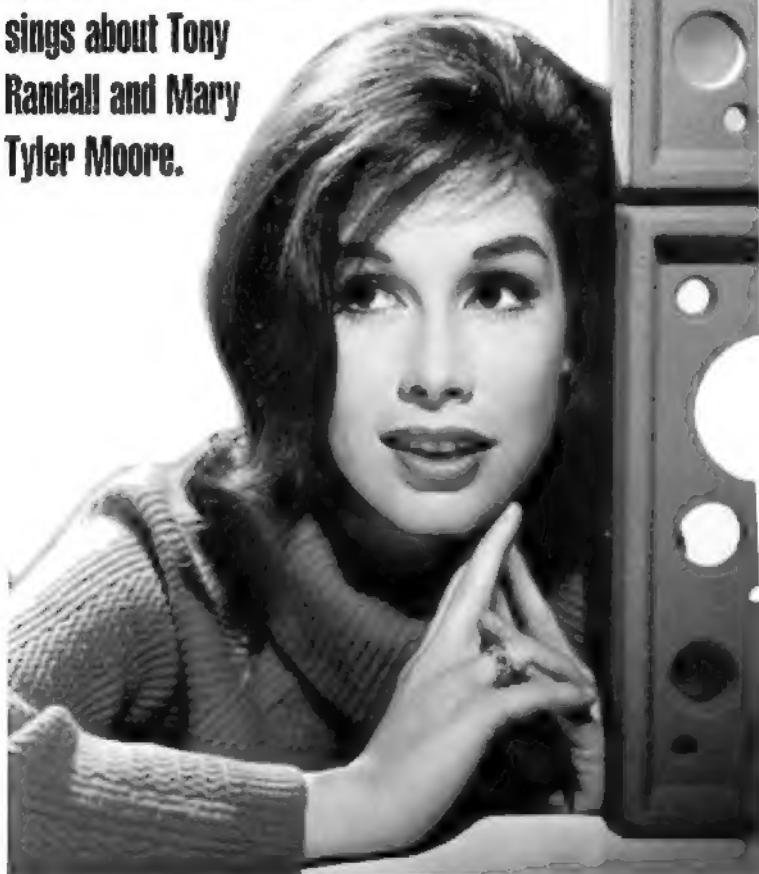
Finally, and perhaps most significantly, is the perception that there's not a need to present as butch anymore. If being visually butch in the late 1980's and early 90's was a signifier, then it was one of identity and resistance. Now that lesbians are hot, and it's acceptable for femme girls to make out with and fuck other femmes, butch is just not needed. It's ubiquitous in pop culture and media. Madonna kisses Brittany. The L-Word. Women with talons at the tips of their fingers inserting said weapons into others' twats. All of this shows that at least lesbians have made it. Never mind that in many places they can't adopt, share



benefits with partners, and in Milwaukee still get chased down by cars when leaving the bars.

At the end of all this I'm left sort of in the same place I was a few weeks ago. Wishing for a punk butch girl to come into my life and pin my boy-femme hands to the bed and cover me with kisses. To feel the strong girl

arms wrap around me and make me feel optimistic and safe while Kathleen Hanna sings about Tony Randall and Mary Tyler Moore.



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